Access and Affordability — Responses to Rising Tuition Fees

• The top three reactions to rising tuition fees were to ask for or borrow more money, cut back on living expenses and earn more money. The least likely response was to leave or quit the program.

• Students have taken various steps to control their living and educational costs to meet their expenses, including the top four responses: cutting back on extras (57%), living at home (55%), seeking employment during the school term (52%) or during the summer (50%).

• When asked where they would like to see their tuition fees spent, the top three areas mentioned were: more course sections (75%), curriculum improvements (59%) and student financial assistance (54%) (see Figure C).

Overall Evaluation

• Students were asked to discuss any concerns with regard to their academic experience at SFU. A random sample of their comments is provided in the Undergraduate Student Survey Report of Findings: Fall of 2003.

• The top three concerns this year are: tuition fees (25%), course availability/demand (9%) and course/exam scheduling (7%).

Highlights

Undergraduate Student Survey

The Undergraduate Student Survey has been conducted at Simon Fraser University in almost every Fall semester since 1992. These annual surveys provide us with essential feedback from our undergraduate students and this year’s survey addressed three primary areas: Course Availability, English Language Skills and Access and Affordability. Highlights from the survey are provided here and a full report on the survey may be obtained from the Office of Analytical Studies’ web site: www.sfu.ca/analytical-studies/ugss/2003/2003.html

This year, 29 undergraduate classes were selected for the survey and these were distributed across SFU’s five faculties, as follows: fifteen in Arts, five each in Applied Sciences and Business, two in Science and one each in Education and SFU@Surrey. A total of 1,177 surveys were completed in class, representing 75% of the unique registrants in those classes. Non-respondents were primarily absent from class.

Course Availability

• This Fall, 85% of students were able to register for the number of courses they wanted and 54% were able to register in all specific courses desired.

• Historical survey results show that course availability is now at the lowest point since 1993 and has been on the decline at SFU since 1997 when course availability levels were at 89% (for number of courses) and 65% (for specific courses).

• Students could not register for specific courses this Fall due to full classes (58%), class time conflicts (31%) and final exam time conflicts (5%).

• In general, the lower the course level, the higher the level of satisfaction with course availability at that level.

• Over half (52%) of all students pursuing a degree are taking longer to complete than initially expected. Primary reasons for extended degree completion time are full courses (19%), courses not offered in the desired semester (15%) and changed program or area of specialization (15).
Course Availability, cont.

- Since 1997, the ability to obtain the desired number of courses has declined 5% and the ability to register for all specific courses desired has declined 11%. This decrease in course availability may be partly responsible for the proportion of students who are taking longer than expected to graduate. (See Figure A).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number Obtained</th>
<th>Specific Obtained</th>
<th>Longer Taking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Survey not administered in Fall 2002.

English Language and Academic English Skills

- In speaking situations, 60% of SFU undergraduates primarily speak English at home, 75% speak English when socializing with friends, 93% when communicating with other students in classes and 94% when conducting commercial business transactions.
- The top two non-English languages spoken at home are Cantonese (16%) and Mandarin (12%).
- Virtually all students use English when reading (97%) or writing (98%).
- When they first arrived at SFU, 79% of students expected to use English all of the time for speaking, but only 71% actually speak English all of the time. Among students who primarily speak a non-English language at home, the expectations and actual use were much lower (56% and 39%).
- The self-assessed impact of English language skills on their SFU grades was 84% positive and 2% negative for English-speaking students versus 51% positive and 31% negative for primarily non-English speaking students.
- Students are less confident in their ability to write academic English than to read academic English. Among those who primarily speak English, the proportion who lacked confidence in academic reading and writing was 1% and 10% respectively, versus 17% and 45% for primarily non-English speakers.

Access and Affordability — Education Costs

- The estimated median annual academic expenses of SFU undergraduate students is $5,300 for domestic students and $12,500 for international students (includes tuition, student fees, educational materials and supplies).
- The estimated median annual non-academic expenses is $5,200 per year for undergraduate students (includes accommodation, food, household operations and furnishings, clothing, transportation, health and personal care, recreation/entertainment, travel to visit family, childcare, etc.).
- 58% of undergraduate students live at home with their parents. These students expect to spend $1,000 to $4,000 per year on non-academic expenses versus $8,000 to $12,000 for students living away from home.
- The estimated median total annual education expenses is roughly $8,500 to $11,000 for domestic students and $16,000 to $20,000 for international students.

Access and Affordability — Education Funding Sources

- The proportion of students who expect to use each of a variety of funding sources and the median annual dollar amount they expect to spend from each source on their education is provided in Figure B.
- Although employment income is the source used most often by students at $3,400 per year, the dollar contribution of government student loans at $8,500 per year is much greater (among those who use this source).